

## **Finding of No Significant Environmental Impact for the Ruth Burnett Sport Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks, Alaska**

National Marine Fisheries Service  
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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6 (May 20, 1999) contains criteria for determining the significance of the impacts of a Proposed Action. In addition, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR 1508.27 state that the significance of an action should be analyzed in terms of both context and intensity. *Context* refers to the relationship of the resource to its physical setting, to its ecological function, and to social priorities and values. *Intensity* refers to the level or magnitude of impact the action is predicted to impose on the resource. The significance of this action has been analyzed on the basis of the NAO 216-6 criteria and CEQ's context and intensity requirement. Each of the environmental criteria listed below has been considered individually as well as in combination with the others. Together, these criteria serve as the basis for a finding of no significant impact. The following summaries reference the locations of the supporting discussions in the *Environmental Assessment for the Ruth Burnett Sport Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks, Alaska*:

- 1) **Ocean, coastal habitats, and essential fish habitat.** The Proposed Action would not cause any effect to ocean and coastal habitats. It is not within an Alaska Coastal Zone Management district (see *Section 5.2, Alaska Coastal Zone Management Program*). The Proposed Action would not cause a significant impact to essential fish habitat as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and identified in fishery management plans (see *Section 4.3, Fish and Aquatic Habitat*). The Lower Chena River, while defined as salmon EFH, contains no known salmon spawning habitat and serves only as a migratory corridor to spawning grounds located farther upstream. The freshwater discharge from the hatchery would affect water temperature of the Chena River by a few degrees, slightly warming it in winter, but would have no effect on fish species in the discharge zone.
- 2) **Biodiversity and/or ecosystem function.** The Proposed Action would have no adverse impact on biodiversity and/or ecosystem function (e.g., benthic productivity, predator-prey relationships, etc.) within the affected area (see *Section 4.3, Fish and Aquatic Habitat*). Discharge from the proposed hatchery would meet Alaska water quality standards for aquatic life and would be optimal in quality for the indigenous species inhabiting the river. The stocking of Interior lakes and ponds would not change with the proposed hatchery in operation, except that it would provide slightly fewer, but larger, fish of the same species used for stocking these lakes under the current program.
- 3) **Public health or safety.** It is not expected that the Proposed Action would have a significant adverse impact on public health or safety. Potential effects related to PH & S identified during Scoping and during the preparation of the EA have been mitigated and/or addressed to a level where there are no significant adverse impacts on public health and safety (see *Section 4.1, Air Quality; Section 4.2, Water Volume, Quality, and Temperature; Section 5.6, Executive Order 13045, Environmental Health Risks and Safety*

*Risks for Children; "Public Health and Safety" and "Hazardous Materials" in Table 3-1, Environmental Resources Analyzed but Not Discussed Further in this Environmental Assessment; and "Air Quality," "Water Quality," and "Hazardous Materials" in Table 4-4, Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures).*

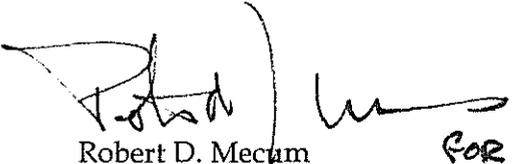
- 4) **Wildlife species.** The Proposed Action would not adversely affect endangered or threatened species, their critical habitats, marine mammals, or other non-target species (see Section 5.4, *Threatened and Endangered Species*; Section 5.1, *Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands*; "Wetlands," "Vegetation," "Birds," and "Wildlife" in Table 3-1, *Environmental Resources Analyzed but Not Discussed Further in this Environmental Assessment*; and "Vegetation" and "Birds and Wildlife" in Table 4-4, *Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures*).
- 5) **Interrelationship of effects.** Significant social or economic impacts are not expected to interrelate with natural or physical environmental effects (see Section 4.10, *Cumulative Impacts*, and Section 5.5, *Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice*).
- 6) **Quality of human environment.** Expected effects of the Proposed Action on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial (see Section 4.4, *Land Ownership and Land Use*; Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*; Section 4.6, *Noise*; Section 4.7, *Visual/Aesthetics*; "Socio-cultural," "Economic," and "Transportation" in Table 3-1, *Environmental Resources Analyzed but Not Discussed Further in this Environmental Assessment*; and "Economic," "Transportation," "Cultural Resources," and "Noise" in Table 4-4, *Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures*).
- 7) **Unique areas.** It is not expected that the Proposed Action would result in any significant impacts to unique areas, such as historic or cultural resources, park land, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, essential fish habitat, or ecologically critical areas (see Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*; Section 5.7, *Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*; Section 5.8, *Tanana Chiefs Council Consultation on Cultural Resources*; Section 4.4, *Land Ownership and Land Use*; Section 5.1, *Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands*; "Wetlands" in Table 3-1, *Environmental Resources Analyzed but Not Discussed Further in this Environmental Assessment*; and "Cultural Resources" in Table 4-4, *Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures*).
- 8) **Human environment uncertainty and risks.** The expected effects of the Proposed Action on the human environment are known and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
- 9) **Cumulatively significant impacts.** The Proposed Action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (see Section 4.10, *Cumulative Impacts*).
- 10) **Scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (see Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*; Section 5.7, *Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*; and "Cultural Resources" in Table 4-4, *Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures*).

- 11) **Nonindigenous species.** Six indigenous fish species would be raised at the hatchery for release, including Arctic char, Chinook salmon, coho salmon, Arctic grayling, lake trout, and rainbow trout. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in the introduction or spread of nonindigenous species in stocked lakes.
- 12) **Precedent for future actions.** The Proposed Action, which is an expansion of an existing statewide fish hatchery program, is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or to represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
- 13) **Environmental protection.** It is not expected that the Proposed Action would threaten a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (see *Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination*, and *Table 4-4, Construction-Related Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures*).
- 14) **Target and non-target species.** The Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects on target species or non-target species (see *Section 4.3, Fish and Aquatic Habitat*).

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#### DETERMINATION

In view of the information presented in this document and the analysis contained in the supporting Environmental Assessment prepared for the Ruth Burnett Sport Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks, Alaska, it is hereby determined that the Ruth Burnett Sport Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks, Alaska will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment as described above and in the Environmental Assessment. In addition, all beneficial and adverse impacts of the Proposed Action have been addressed to reach the conclusion of no significant impacts. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for this action is not necessary.

  
Robert D. Mecum  
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region  
NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service

FOR D/M

Date

MAY 22, 2007